

Measurement and evaluation of the public administration performance through delivery of electronic services

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper concerns the relation between delivery of electronic services (e-services) and evaluation of public administration performance. Public sector organizations should pay attention and determine the strategies to be followed in order to increase the satisfaction of citizens and businesses in relation to delivery of electronic services. The study aims to review the demands toward progress to the competitiveness, the sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness in public administration that have rapidly enforced the wide reforms in the public sector, in order to modernize the initiatives to offer better electronic services for the citizens. The article aims to present that the transformation process toward providing electronic services to the citizens should be assessed continuously, in light with challenges, demands and process of globalization, in order to strengthen the capacities of public administration and make it more efficient. In this regard, the regular evaluation and measurement of the public administration performance leads toward the promotion of enhanced public services and higher level of accountability.

Through receiving the e-services, citizens can save their time, can reduce the expenses and create an easier access of communication with all levels of the government.

Keywords: e-services; measurement; evaluation; performance; efficiency

Introduction

The process of delivery electronic services to the citizens in public administration is considered as an ongoing evolution and ongoing renovation that is closely related with simplification of administrative procedures, enhancement of accountability and awareness, digitalization of service delivery and improvement of effectiveness and efficiency in the public sector. Evaluation of public administration performance is a wide-ranging organizational strategy that affects the completely organizational functions. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to present the indicators that effect the citizens' consideration in relation to public e-services and increase the awareness about the use of these services.

Extensive use of different ICT tools enables the implementation of new techniques and manners on delivery of more qualitative and quantitative e-services 24 hours per

day to the citizens. Through receiving the e-services, citizens can save their time, can reduce the expenses and create an easier access of communication with all levels of the government. There is a need to move toward the closer cooperation with citizens in order to develop and advance the current policies in relation to delivery of e-services. In addition, it is important to encourage the employee's efforts to move towards in the implementation of new technologies in order to overcome the actual challenges, and to present the new e-service approaches that would enhance the level of citizens' expectations in this field.

Delivery of computerized (electronic) services to the citizens

Today many countries in the world have promoted widespread reforms toward providing electronic services to the citizens. The delivery of electronic services to the citizens is a promoter of a high level of democracy, credibility and productivity in relation to the functions committed by the government.

In the nineties, the term 'service' in western governments received a new connotation. Governments started to realize that citizen satisfaction with and confidence in government largely depended on the way in which governments interacted with their environment, in the way governments served their constituents. Government attracted many cliches; cumbersome, bureaucratic, opaque, non-transparent.¹ Providing an exact definition of e-service is hard to come by as researchers have been using different definitions related to e-service. Regardless of these different definitions, it can be concluded that all researches agree about the role of technology in facilitating the delivery of services. Based on the approach that was adopted by Rowley, he defines e-services as "deeds, efforts or performances whose delivery is mediated by information technology"².

UN E-Government Survey evaluates Member States regarding their e-government readiness using the stages of emerging, enhanced, interactive, transactional and connected e-services and assesses the e-participation level of e-government services by categorizing them into services that support e-information, e-consultation or e-decision-making³. Indicators of public e-services are systematized. The list of access quality indicators includes the infrastructure, knowledge, operational readiness and cost. The indicators representing service quality include indicators of hardware usage, security, user-friendly methods of use, content and user-friendly work environment⁴.

¹ E-Service Delivery. A manual for delivering E-services as a local government in the digital information society, VNG International Product. The Hague, the Netherlands, (2007), p.4.

² Rowley, J. An analysis of the e-service literature: towards a research agenda. Internet Research, (2006), 16 (3), 339-359.

³ United Nations E-Government Survey (2010).

<http://unpan3.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2010-Survey/Complete->

⁴ Naujikiienė and Dzemydienė. Evaluation of Public E-Services and Information Technology Accessibility in Different Social Groups: ISSN 2029-7564 (online), SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES 2(2), (2012), 335-348.

Each public official should be responsible for the actions taken in public administration not only for managing human resources but also for offering more effective and qualitative services to the citizens. The delivery of electronic services to the citizens is a continuing process that requires e-services preface and development of new strategies in order to measure and evaluate the present status of public administration in providing e-services to the citizens. This process would influence the increase of government responsiveness toward citizens. Government responsiveness is achieved by a variety of mechanisms such as political, legal, and administrative, designed to prevent corruption and ensure that public officials remain answerable and accessible to the people they serve. In the absence of such mechanisms, corruption may thrive (Batalli, M. 2011).

Performance has become a defining feature of modern government. The age of performance has produced commitment to, but not necessarily clarity about, the universal objective of organizational and government improvement. Performance and performance management continues to be enigmatic concepts⁵. The importance of a well-performing public administration was reiterated in Resolution 57/277 of the “General Assembly on Public Administration and Development” (dated 20 December 2002), which states that “an efficient, accountable, effective and transparent public administration, at both the national and international levels, has a key role to play in the implementation of internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”. In that context, the Resolution stresses the “need to strengthen public sector administrative and managerial capacity-building, in particular in developing countries and countries in economic transition”.

The delivery of e-services was enabled by use of ICT in the daily performance of the government. Extensive use of different ICT tools enables the implementation of new techniques and manners on delivery of more qualitative and quantitative e-services 24 hours per day to the citizens. Technological improvements should be done in harmony with overall public sectors strategy reforms, in order this process to be more inclusive. The revolution of eGovernment influences the transformation of citizens’ relations with the administration, through improvement of service delivery on one hand and communication on the other hand.

ICT are considered as important tools for achieving administrative simplification objectives by reducing the administrative burden and improving the quality of public service⁶. E-services can contribute extensively to the process of innovation of the governments. It can smooth the progress of communication and coordination of

⁵ Geert Bouckaert and John Halligan. A Framework for Comparative Analysis of Performance Management: Paper for presentation to Study Group on Productivity and Quality in the Public Sector, Conference of European Group of Public Administration, Università Bocconi, Milan, 6-9 September 2006.

⁶ Batalli, Mirlinda. Simplification of public administration through use of ICT and other tools
European Journal of ePractice · N° 12 · March/April (2011) ISSN: 1988-625X, 21-37,

authorities at different levels of government. However, the real benefit of providing e-services to citizens depends not only in the direct use of technology, but also in its application to move ahead the renovation of public administration. The information society represents a challenge to government to modernize itself from top to bottom and raises citizens' expectations. For citizens this simply means clicking on or accessing the information they need on different web links⁷

While countries have come to government reform for very different reasons, government reform and innovation is a global phenomenon⁸.

Expected advantages from e-services

The electronic services make easy the citizens life by effecting the redaction of cost and offering more efficient and effective services. These services let the administration to function on smaller budget and more efficiently. On the other hand, the e-services fulfill the government's internal needs. Most of the citizens are conscious about the advantages of e-services as it moves the government from manual supply of information to an on line and complex transmission in one hand, and improve the benefit and product developments on the other hand.

In many parts of the world, there is a growing tendency among citizens to expect public services to make a positive impact on their lives, and at the lowest possible tax rate⁹. Effective public e-services can only be developed if governments offer citizen-centric services that deliver measurable public value¹⁰. E-services can be considered as key element for the economic developments, therefore the citizens and businesses expect to access many data and information in a flexible manner. In this regard provision of e-services is linked with level of professional management, sustainable economic prosperity, governance accountability, transparency cost control and decision-making.

Lu, J. identifies a number of benefits for e-services, such as: Accessing a greater customer base; broadening market reach, lowering of entry barrier to new markets and cost of acquiring new customers; alternative communication channel to customers; increasing services to customers; enhancing perceived company image; gaining competitive advantages; potential for increasing customer knowledge¹¹.

⁷ Batalli, Mirlinda. Impact of Public Administration Innovations on Enhancing the Citizens' Expectations: International Journal of e-Education, e-Business, e-Management and e-Learning, Vol. 1, No. 2, (2011) June, 156.

⁸ Kamarck C. Elaine. Government Innovation around the World, Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, (2003), p3.

⁹ Jupp V and Younger M P. A Value Model for the Public Sector. Accenture. (2004), Retrieved April 2, 2008,

¹⁰ McDonald N Blakemore M and Kelleher J. Think Paper 9: Aarhus Seminar, Discussion Paper: Towards a Handbook for Citizen-Centricity, Organizational Change for Citizen-Centric e-Government, e-Government Unit, DG Information Society and Media, European Commission, (2007).

¹¹ Lu, J. Measuring cost/benefits of e-business applications and customer satisfaction: Proceedings of the 2nd International Web Conference, 29–30, November, Perth, (2001), Australia, 139-47

The implementation of e-services improves the efficiency and effectiveness of actual systems, enable easier and better communication between government, citizens and businesses, the delivery and obtain of information at the faster swiftness, reduces the costs and replaces most of manual services through papers with e-services provided to the citizens.

Countries with low infrastructure development and high marketing institutional development are expected to have a low level of e-services penetration due to the lack of infrastructure support ¹².

Measurement and evaluation of public administration performance in relation to delivery of electronic services.

Public administration is one of the main tools through which the relationship between the state, civil society and the private sector is manifested. In this regard supporting public administration innovations enables achieving higher development objectives in particular economic advantages, poverty reduction, harmony and institutional stability ¹³.

The delivery of better services to the citizens is related to the understanding of government concerning the citizens' perception and assessment of offered services. In this regard better quality of service delivery enables higher level of citizens' satisfaction. UN study of benchmarking government sought to provide governments worldwide with a measuring tool that shows their respective areas of strengths and weaknesses with the e-government readiness domain¹⁴. The objectives of the study were focused on:

- comparative assessment of the Member States' ability to transform their governments by using information and communication technologies to deliver online services and products to their citizens;
- benchmarking tool to monitor the advancement of governments in implementing e-government services.

Public administration, respectively governments should be focused on the strategies that encourage to constantly improve and advance the efficiency, transparency and accountability in performance of their functions. Each organization within public administration must have into consideration the objectives to be reached for a mid and long term process related to e-services in order to improve the level of communication

¹² Sheth, Jagdish N., and Arun Sharma. International E-Marketing: Opportunities and Issues, International Marketing Review, 22, 6, (2005), 611-22

¹³ Batalli, Mirlinda. (2011). Impact of Public Administration Innovations on Enhancing the Citizens' Expectations: International Journal of e-Education, e-Business, e-Management and e-Learning, Vol. 1, No. 2, June, 156.

¹⁴ United Nations (2008). E-Government Survey.
http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/global_reports/10report.htm#sa

within and outside the organization. Organizations should pay attention to the examination of developments and improvements in order to enable the measurement of benefits for the citizens, and businesses in the future.

It is important to avoid measurement/management systems that are not used, that demonstrate failures (because of technical problems, illegitimacy, or dysfunctionality), or that clearly demonstrates a perverse effect¹⁵. It is essential to launch a method based on the social quality assessment of e-services in different social groups of citizens.

In recent years, some countries have established institutions or procedures, which systematically assess the performance of public policies. Spain created an independent State Agency for the evaluation of public policies and service quality in December 2006. Its purpose is to promote and assess public policies with the aim to foster a rational use of public resources and quality management of services. In France, the wider use of public policy audits had led to improvement and simplification of processes, higher efficiency of management practices and better functioning of the public administration. In Luxembourg, the Court of Auditors has far-reaching powers to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of public spending. The responsibilities of institutions like the Czech Science Foundation (GA CR) are more limited in scope but no less important to evaluate the efficiency of the research effort of the public sector¹⁶.

Governments increasingly require administrators to develop outcome measurements that reflect a program's impact on society¹⁷. The marketing of e-services introduced by the public organizations increase the number of users and guarantee their satisfaction on use of e-services 24 hours per day in 7 days of week.

The assessment of the work of public administration related to the e-service quality is based in several factors to be evaluated such as sustainability of public administration in relation to the generated outcomes and feedback, effectiveness and efficiency in relation to the objectives that are reached and significance of the achievements.

For the empirical investigation, the following hypotheses were made:

- The lower the e-service cost is the higher the user satisfaction;
- The higher the e-service benefit is the higher the user satisfaction;
- The lower the e-service risk is the higher the user satisfaction;
- The higher the e-service opportunity is the higher the user satisfaction¹⁸.

¹⁵ Bouckaert Geert. 'Improving Performance Measurement', in A. Halachmi and G., Bouckaert (eds.) *The Enduring Challenges in Public Management, Surviving and Excelling in a Changing World*. San Fransisco, Jossey Bass, (1995).

¹⁶ Economic Policy Committee. European Commission, Initiatives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending: Modernizing Public Administration: Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs, Brussels,7 ECFIN/EPC (2007) REP/53684 rev. 2, (2007), 1-12

¹⁷ Amber Wichowsky and Donald P. Moynihan. *Measuring How Administration Shapes Citizenship: A PolicyFeedback Perspective on Performance Management*, *Public Administration Review* 68 (5), (2008), 908-920.

¹⁸ Tsohou,A., Lee,H., Irani,Z., Weerakkody, V., Osmani, I., Latif, A., Medeni, T. *Evaluating E-Government Services From A Citizens' Perspective: A Reference Process Model*, (2012), p.146.

In this regard, the abovementioned factors that make easy the citizens life are also related to the governments' efforts to encourage e-governance on different sectors, advancement of professional skills of civil servants and strengthening of self-confidence regarding the positive feedback. Performance measurement has focused attention on the impacts of public policies, but in a narrow way, emphasizing socioeconomic and efficiency indicators, as the only advantage point from which to assess program performance¹⁹.

Brown, K., Repucci. S. examined the key elements that need to be taken into account when measuring the performance of the public administration, in terms of their contribution to the efficiency, quality and effectiveness of public administration. Such as Civil service management; Public financial management; Government policy making; Leadership and Service delivery²⁰.

Citizens' satisfaction regarding delivery of electronic services

Citizens' expectations and public perception related to delivery e-services have a strong impact in measurement and evaluation of the public administration. Each organization should be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in relation to delivery of such services in order to measure citizens' satisfaction.

Outcomes include side effects, whether intended or not and whether beneficial or detrimental. If the program recognizes in advance that such side effects can occur, it should design the performance measurement process regularly to assess them. As long as they are important and can be tracked, outcomes should be included in the performance measurement system, even if they are not explicitly identified in the program's mission and objective statements²¹. Policy feed-back theory stresses that mass opinion and behavior are not just functions of individual characteristics and preferences but also the result of interactions between institutions and citizens²².

Considering the perception of citizens and their stance in relation to e-services is important measure for all organizations, since this understanding will serve the government in further improvements on communication platforms that can influence citizens' attitudes and behaviors. The citizen's positive feedback is an important indicator in relation to satisfaction of citizens with the e-services in order to continue and use the online services constantly.

¹⁹ Amber Wichowsky and Donald P. Moynihan. *Measuring How Administration Shapes Citizenship: A PolicyFeedback Perspective on Performance Management*, Public Administration Review 68 (5), (2008), 908-920.

²⁰ Brown, K., Repucci. S. *A Users' Guide to Measuring Public Administration Performance: United Nations Development Programme, Oslo Governance Centre, first edition*, (2009), 4.

²¹ Amber Wichowsky and Donald P. Moynihan. *Measuring How Administration Shapes Citizenship: A PolicyFeedback Perspective on Performance Management*, Public Administration Review 68 (5), (2008), 908-920.

²² Mettler, Suzanne, and Joe Soss. *The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics. Perspectives on Politics* 2, (2004), 55 – 73.

Customer orientation is one of the most important long-term objectives of public administration and a key element in the effective and efficient supply of quality services. This objective will be realized within e-government by developing integrated services that not only bring together services dispersed and fragmented among individual administrative bodies, but also integrate them into more complex units that match citizens' needs and problems²³.

The effectiveness of e-Service can be influenced by citizen's view and perception of the implications of ICT and e-Service. The examination of the government performance should be conducted in all levels, in order to have a comprehensive feedback in relation to satisfaction of citizens with e-services, further needs of business users and actual problems, challenges and obstacles that citizens face in daily activity with administration.

Participation creates a feedback mechanism, providing ways for citizens to communicate to administrators who, in turn, can use that information to improve the program²⁴. Citizenship outcomes will tend to be long-term measures, but this is true for many of the outcomes tracked by government, which are intended to prompt managers to think about the overall purposes of government action²⁵.

E-government investigators distinguish the following possible e-power estimation techniques: formation of the program aim achievement matrix, providing the results based on the planned objectives, application of the balanced calculation method of results, based on the performance indicators, which relate to the objectives of the program or arise during the program's execution fulfilment development of the cost profit model, by estimating the program realization costs and profit obtained from the program, evaluation and selection of alternative strategies to realize the targets, with a view to find an economical and effective expenditure model ²⁶.

Conclusion

The measurement of the performance of public administration related to the delivery of e-services is a challenging process, especially since the services involve the whole population. In this regard, the measurement should consider the direct and indirect effects. Therefore, there is a need for establishment of procedures in order to evaluate the performance of public administration in systematic manner in order to increase the level of efficiency of the management practices.

²³ M. Vintar, M. Kunstelj and A. Leben. Benchmarking the Quality of Slovenian Life-Event Portals, in: Improving the Quality of East and West European Public Services, E. Löffler and M.Vintar, eds, Ashgate, Hampshire,(2004) 208–221.

²⁴ Thomas, John C. Public Participation in PublicDecisions. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (1995).

²⁵ Hatry, Harry P. Performance Measurement: Getting Results. Washington, DC: Urban Institute (1999).

²⁶ Bovaird, T. Performance Measurement and Evaluation of E-government and E-governance Programmes and Initiatives: Practicing E-government: a GlobalPerspective. Hershey, PA, USA: Idea Group, Publishing,(2005),16–61.

The citizens should increase the level of understanding in relation to their expectations for the performance of public administration and achieved results related to the delivery of e-services. Evaluation of public administration performance is a wide-ranging organizational strategy that affects the completely organizational functions. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to present the indicators that effect the citizens' consideration in relation to public e-services and increase the awareness about the use of these services.

On the other hand, the achievement of efficiency in the work of administration is linked with citizens' readiness to use electronic services instead of other alternatives. There is always a difference between rank of claim and rank of supplies regarding the e-services, therefore in order to fulfill the existing gap the views and better perceptions of citizens' demands and expectations should be considered more carefully.

In this regard, there is a need to move toward the closer cooperation with citizens in order to develop and advance the current policies in relation to delivery of e-services. In addition, it is important to encourage the employee's efforts to move towards in the implementation of new technologies in order to overcome the actual challenges, and to present the new e-service approaches that would enhance the level of citizens' expectations in this field. The study of e-service performances approaches shows the deficiency of methods and techniques for the proper assessments from the practical point of view.

The execution of this role and the success of the measurement and evaluation of the public administration performance can be closely linked with the budgetary level and proposals since one of the significant challenges is that costs are closer than profits.

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